

Christlikeness

or Not?

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Christlikeness – or Not?

If the truth be told or acknowledged, it is highly likely that many of us really do not want to be like Jesus Christ. This statement goes against the grain of what most of us would actually say. But when the evidence of what Christlikeness truly involves is faced, then this opening statement may carry more weight than not.

Christlikeness means to be like Christ. Christlikeness includes many themes, such as joy (John 15:11) and love (John 15:12), but it also includes many themes which are very challenging. So, what does this mean? What is involved in being like Christ? The following seeks to answer these type questions with details or specific actions which may, indeed, challenge our affirmative words.

First, Jesus Christ lived in poverty (2 Co. 8:9). How many of us gladly embrace such a thought? How much of our lives consists of actions and efforts to avoid poverty at any level? How often are we motivated by money to do what we do? How many poor people in churches have positions of influence? How often do we pet and pamper the rich in hopes that they will help our church building be more elaborate or physically impressive than the others in our community or state? How often do church and denominational leaders measure church growth in terms of financial contributions to the denomination? How often do pastors leave for another church which gives them a higher salary and/or other benefits?

Second, Jesus Christ was misunderstood and hated by religious leaders. How many of us gladly embrace the thought of being misunderstood and hated by anyone – especially those in religious ranks? How often do we seek to compromise or marginalize our religious beliefs in order to avoid misunderstanding and hatred from fellow-believers or people of influence within our community? How often do we seek to flatter those religious leaders who just might be used or manipulated by us to advance our own positions in the church or to whom we court denominational favors?

Third, Jesus Christ was persecuted and hounded by people in many ways on many days while He walked numerous pathways on this planet. Rather than cry about it or let such reactions discourage Him from doing the will of God, He countered such abuse with increased determination to stick to the tasks at hand, resisted pulls to deflate and discourage Him, and always sought first the rule of God whatever the cost. How often do we easily succumb to opposition and quit the pastorate, give up on the Christian faith, and find fulfillment in worldly endeavors or pursuits? How frequently do we swim in the pools of self-

pity, seek solace in personal pleasures to the exclusion of faithful service, and forsake God's call upon our lives?

Fourth, Jesus Christ was disrespected and treated as just another human being who could be bought for a price. How many of us become puffed up with resentment over those who dare not treat us with the dignity we deserve? In what ways do we desperately strive to elevate our status in church and/or the community? In what ways do we court the favor of others at the expense of integrity?

Fifth, Jesus Christ gave His life in death in behalf of His sinful enemies. How many of us despise our enemies and become shell-shocked at how they treat us? How often do we let our sinful enemies become the objects of our compassions, mercies, and goodwill in their behalf? How many of us cherish the idea of having a reputation that we eat and drink with notorious sinners and tax-collectors (Mk. 2:16/Lk. 5:30)?

Sixth, Jesus Christ was betrayed by His friends and did not experience resentment or turn them away from His company. How many of us betray our wives or husbands or children or friends? How often do we let others down and never blink an eye over it? How often do others betray us and we become more determined than ever to never embrace their friendship again?

Seventh, Jesus Christ resisted using His power to defeat His enemies. How often do we in church or denominational affairs employ our powers of influence to blackball people who differ from our beliefs and regard them as enemies who must be banned from our circles of influence and power? In what ways do we strive to define our enemies as anyone who does not see things the way we do, sing the same songs we sing, play the same instruments we play, and talk the same talk we do? How often do we show love and acceptance to those whose pathways may deviate in ways which we personally resent – and may not even understand?

Eighth, Jesus Christ chose suffering over glory and popularity. How many of us in church, business affairs, denominational pursuits, family life, and other social positions welcome suffering so that others may be promoted or elevated? How much utter selfishness drives us into pathways of desperation to guarantee recognition and favor from those with money, fame, or prestigious powers?

I am not so sure I want to be like Jesus. My words say yes but my attitudes and actions may say the opposite. What about you?